

Hyattsville Environment Committee (HEC)

Meeting Minutes

July 8, 2025

7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Open to the Public -- Zoom Webinar Meeting

Register to attend the virtual meeting via Zoom Webinar here:

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Eskit16hS62VEsKN4DH4YQ

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

Attendees: Melissa Schweisguth, Thaddeus Waterman, Rayya Newman, Malgorzata Bereziewicz, Staff Liaison Dawn Taft, Council Liaison Danny Schaible **Guests:** Abraham Lopez Trejo, Jim Tufa, Michael Bonds, Scott Wilson, Sonia Vargas, Anusree Nair, Kristen Brown

Agenda Items:

1. Welcome, Committee Roll Call, & Guest Orientation.
2. Approval of [May](#) Meeting Minutes
 - a. Unanimous approval (after some revisions)
3. Approval of [June](#) Meeting Minutes
 - a. Unanimous approval (after some revisions)
4. Public Comment Period (Comments limited to 3 minutes per person)
 - a. No public comments
5. Climate Action Plan [Survey Themes](#) (15 minutes)
 - a. Anusree Nair (Prince George's Planning) and Sonia Vargas (UMD) joined to discuss Climate Action Plan Survey
 - b. Partnering with UMD to perform a climate survey for Hyattsville
 - c. Major Themes of survey found: [here](#)
 - i. Common themes were developed based on past surveys of other areas
 - d. Overview of Goals of the Climate Action Plan Survey
 - i. Survey Residents to see what residents are interested in for a plan
 - e. Survey Themes
 - i. Land Conservation & Agriculture
 - ii. Climate Mitigation & Energy
 - iii. Climate Adaption & Resilience
 - iv. Transportation & Connectivity
 - v. Equity & Community Engagement

- vi. Historic Preservation & Cultural Assets
- vii. Economic Development & Small Business
- viii. Education & Youth Involvement
- ix. Public Health & Safety
- x. Waste Management & Sustainable Materials
- xi. Governance & Policy
- xii. Community Co-Ownership & Trust Building
 - 1. Paid internships for immigrants/students
 - 2. “Senior Society” groups and “Repair Fairs” to engage residents as active implementers and not just recipients of climate actions
- f. New Survey Topics and themes accepted by email **until July 15th** email sternsurvey@umd.edu
- g. HEC Committee, City Staff, and others will work on survey questions in the future on these topics
- h. Questions**
 - i. How is the survey being administered, what is the engagement level in other areas?
 - 1. Previous survey was performed in Brentwood, received close to 20% engagement. Survey in Brentwood brought out details that were unexpected. In Hyattsville will be going door to door for survey, leaving door hangers, QR codes to apartment buildings, etc. Not sure what the expected response rate will be since Hyattsville is larger than Brentwood. Themes were pulled from previous Hyattsville action plans, Brentwood plan, and other available resources. Brentwood had partnered with UMD and received large response by going door to door with students.
 - ii. Using the shared document to come up with questions on the survey. Any issues with things that we won't be able to implement? Goal to edit down or add to survey questions?
 - 1. Goal is to pick and choose which topics are the strong points to include in a survey. Send any thoughts on what is most important to Hyattsville by July 15th to sternsurvey@umd.edu
 - iii. When is this survey looking to be performed?
 - 1. Looking to have Students performing survey in October. Have survey developed by early August
 - iv. Next Steps? Are we being asked to cull sub-topics?

1. This is a starting ground. Looking for feedback on what the most important details we want to know from the residents for the Climate Action Plan.
- v. How concerned should we be about trolling and getting bad responses?
 1. People are opting to pick up the pad/fill out the survey. We are asking people to give their opinion on things, easy to filter out trolling responses.
6. Zero Waste Presentation (30 minutes)
 - a. Kristen Brown of WasteZero joined us to talk about Zero Waste and PayYourWay initiatives
 - b. WasteZero is not a non-profit, but they aren't also profit driven. They are a benefit corporation focused on cutting trash waste in half
 - c. For the communities they have worked with since the 90's - most have cut the trash waste in half. Most of the 500 communities they have worked with are across the Northwest, but a pilot exists in Maryland
 - d. Goal is to create actionable plans to reduce trash waste.
 - e. Benefits aren't just environmental. The price of trash waste is increasing as disposal capacity is diminishing. Many states are shipping their waste out of state, Maryland is expected to have higher tipping fees as existing trash landfills become filled. Current tipping fees are \$80-90 per ton currently, but in near states are already at \$105-140 per ton.
 - f. Trash is a Public Bad, Not a Public Good. It should be priced as a utility
 - g. The Current system is not equitable - you pay less per pound the more waste you generate
 - h. Unit-Based Pricing results in an average Waste Reduction of 44%
 - i. Results are Immediate and Predictable - when people have to pay for waste they are nudged to be more thoughtful and potentially use existing recycling and composting services
 - j. Different models exist - High Cost Bags - Low Cost Bags - Free Bags with paying for overflow
 - k. Greenbelt has an opt-out model - pay higher to throw away as you want to - opt in to system to potentially pay less
 - l. Questions
 - i. How are they logistically performing the opt-in and opt-out system?
 1. Some municipalities have chips in their trash containers to keep track automatically of who has opted in vs opted out. Some cities have stickers to add to bins. If you have a sticker showing you paid for opt out they will just throw all the trash out.

- ii. Interested in how Greenbelt calibrated their charters, ordinances, etc. Where can we view this?
 - 1. Greenbelt just implemented unit based system so records may not be updated yet. Greenbelt already has ordinances that allow them to implement fees, Hyattsville will likely have to add an ordinance in place to charge fees. Hyattsville may be able to use an existing bag ordinance to begin implementation. Greenbelt is currently charging a fee quarterly so it is easier to move to a unit-based system.
- iii. How is the vote in Greenbelt?
 - 1. The vote was unanimous. One of the council members was hesitant for her own family, but realized it was feasible when they started recycling better. Costs are skyrocketing, moving to a unit-based system is a way for people to gain control.
- iv. What are the next steps to proceed? Should we revive a bill to study the feasibility
 - 1. You don't necessarily need a study, you can always quit after a year long pilot. You can make plans in the budget to assist those in need, it may be easier just to try the system.
- v. Who is Greenbelt paying? Is this self running? How does the company fit into this?
 - 1. WasteZero consults and supplies the trash bags. Supplying the trash bags is where they generate money, the consulting is usually done at cost. For the next year WasteZero is looking to do some small one year pilots and provide assistance to municipalities. WasteZero is trying to get a foot in the door in Maryland.
- vi. How does the Unit Based system impact recycling and composting?
 - 1. Some people will put their trash in recycling, but the program in general makes people think twice about what the existing rules are. On average, people will pay more attention to their recycling and composting streams. You are also likely to get some illegal dumping, but it doesn't generally stick. People are unlikely to start dumping their trash elsewhere, and those who do can often be traced back to the source. Main concern we see is that people generally think trash should be free, and you have to change this perception.

- vii. What are we looking for from the Hyattsville Environment Committee? May be a broader conversation - What do we want to support (study, pilot program, etc).
 - 1. Further discussion at a new meeting
- 7. Any Other Business
 - a. Dawn talked to Nate about the Green Team vs the role HEC takes. The biggest stop committees taking actions are taking up staff time or funding. HEC could expand on what it does and support things we want to take on.
 - b. Dawn Invasive Vine Grant / Weed Warriors
 - i. CCAN & Casey Tree have a grant to work on private properties. Going to be able to work in specific areas to remove invasives on private property. Looking to do a kick-off in the Fall.
- 8. Announcements
- 9. Adjournment

Virtual Meeting Procedure and Etiquette for Guests

- The Committee chair/city staff will handle audio settings for guests. However, as a best practice, please keep your audio muted when you are not speaking.
- Please keep other devices (e.g., cell phones, televisions, radios, etc.) silenced during meetings to minimize audio distractions.
- Please use the “Raise Hand” feature if you would like to speak during the public comment periods of the meeting.
- The City does not enable the Chat function for guests. Please use the Q&A function to share questions and comments.